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28-Year Trend

MORE TODAY SEE RELIGION IMPORTANT

PRINCETON, N.J. — The proportion of Americans who say religion is "very important" in their lives, after having plunged from 75% in 1952 to 52% in 1978, has now shown a slight upturn to 56% in the latest nationwide survey.

The decline between 1952 and 1978 in those who said religion was very important was far more marked among Catholics (32 points) than among Protestants (16 points). Since the 1978 survey a slight upturn in those holding this view is noted for both Catholics and Protestants.

The downtrend between 1952 and 1978 was similar for men and women, although more women than men put a high premium on religion in their lives. In terms of the age groups, however, a particularly sharp downtrend was noted among the 18-24 year-old group, a 27-point decline. For the nation as a whole, a 23-point decline was recorded over this period of time.

QUESTION AND NATIONAL RESULTS

Following is the question asked in each survey:

"How important would you say religion is in your own life — very important, fairly important, or not very important?"

Here is the trend in national findings:

HOW IMPORTANT RELIGION IN LIFE?

	Very	Fairly	Not Very	No Opin
1952	75%	20%	5%	*%
1965	70	22	7	1
1978	52	32	14	2
1980	56	30	13	1

* Less than one %.

Here are the trends for Protestants and Catholics:

Responses of Protestants

	Very	Fairly	Not Very	No Opin
1952	76%	20%	4%	*%
1965	74	20	5	1
1978	60	31	8	1
1980	62	29	8	1

Responses of Catholics

	Very	Fairly	Not Very	No Opin
1952	83%	14%	3%	*%
1965	76	20	3	1
1978	51	36	11	2
1980	56	34	9	1

The following tables show the trend for men and women and for the 18-24 age group:

Responses of men

	Very	Fairly	Not Very	No Opin
1952	68%	22%	8%	2%
1965	63	26	10	1
1978	46	35	18	1
1980	49	33	17	1

Responses of women

	Very	Fairly	Not Very	No Opin
1952	79%	18%	3%	*%
1965	77	18	4	1
1978	58	29	11	2
1980	62	28	9	1

Responses of 18-24 age group

	Very	Fairly	Not Very	No Opin
1952	64%	30%	6%	*%
1965	57	32	10	1
1978	37	43	19	1
1980	44	41	14	1

THIRD SAY RELIGION MOST IMPORTANT THING IN LIVES

While a majority of U.S. adults today (56%) say religion is "very important" in their lives, fewer (31%) say their religious beliefs are the "most important thing" in their lives.

Age is a key factor, with only 14% of the 18-24 year-old age group indicating their religious beliefs are the dominant factor in their lives. This percentage is nearly doubled in the 25-29 year-old age group, while among those 30 to 49 years-old the proportion is 31% and among those 50 and older the figure is 41%.

HOW HARD DO PEOPLE TRY?

Another question in a Gallup survey sought to gain insight into people's estimation of how hard they try to put their faith into practice. While obviously a difficult area to probe, it is of interest to note that about half (52%) of all persons interviewed believe they "try hard to practice their religious faith in their daily lives."

Coming Next Issue!

- * The views of voters on the Moral Majority.
- * Do teens think religion can answer today's problems?
- * Is confidence in organized religion slipping?

1 In 5 Adults are Evangelicals

PRINCETON, N.J. — Although the influence of evangelicals in U.S. society is being felt in new ways, the actual proportion of adults who can be classified as evangelicals, according to one rigorous definition, has shown little change over the last four years.

A total of 19% in recent Gallup surveys can be classified as evangelicals. Four years ago, in the presidential year of 1976, the comparable figure was 18%.

Evangelicals in the survey were defined as those with three basic characteristics: (1) they describe themselves as "born-again Christians" or say they have had a "born-again" experience; (2) they have encouraged other people to believe in Jesus Christ; and (3) they believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible. (This was a rigorous definition because some evangelicals do not hold a literal interpretation of the Bible, although they would accept the absolute authority of the Bible.)

While statistically the current figure for evangelicals represents no change since 1976, the figure does represent an increase in terms of numbers of people, due to population growth. The current figure projects to about 30 million adults.

QUESTION AND NATIONAL RESULTS

Following are the questions asked in the current and 1976 surveys and the results:

"Would you say that you have been born again or have had a born-again experience — that is, a turning point in your life when you committed yourself to Jesus Christ?"

PERCENT SAYING BORN AGAIN

1980	.38%
1976	.34

"Have you ever tried to encourage someone to believe in Jesus Christ or to accept Him as his or her Savior?"

ENCOURAGED SOMEONE TO ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST

1980	.44%
1976	.47

"Which of these statements comes closest to describing your feelings about the Bible?" Respondents were shown a card with the following statements:

- A. The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word.
- B. The Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word.
- C. The Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men.

HOLD LITERAL VIEW OF BIBLE

1980	.39%
1976	.38

% ANSWERING AFFIRMATIVELY TO ALL THREE QUESTIONS ('Evangelicals')

1980	.19%
1976	.18

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF NON-EVANGELICALS

It is interesting to note that as many as one-fourth of non-evangelicals (according to the definition used in these surveys) say they are "born again" or have had a "born again" experience.

The following tables compare the religious practices and beliefs of evangelicals and non-evangelicals, based on the recent surveys:

% SAYING 'BORN AGAIN'

Evangelicals	100%
Non-evangelicals	24

ENCOURAGED SOMEONE TO ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST

Evangelicals	100%
Non-evangelicals	32

HOLD LITERAL VIEW OF BIBLE

Evangelicals	100%
Non-evangelicals	.25

ATTENDED CHURCH IN LAST 7 DAYS

Evangelicals	.65%
Non-evangelicals	.35

MEMBER OF A CHURCH

Evangelicals	.89%
Non-evangelicals	.68

IMPORTANCE OF RELIGION IN LIVES (% Saying 'Very Important')

Evangelicals	.87%
Non-evangelicals	.48

PROFILE OF EVANGELICALS (Two surveys combined)

Men	38%
Women	62
Whites	74
Non-whites	26
College background	19
High school	56
Grade school	24
18 - 29 years old	21
30 - 49 years old	33
50 and older	45
Protestants	89
Catholics	10
East	15
Midwest	23
South	50
West	12

Fewer Catholics Want Large Families

PRINCETON, N.J. — A sharp decline has occurred during the last 12 years in the proportion of Americans who favor large families, with the trend far more pronounced among Catholics than Protestants.

In 1968, 50 percent of Catholics believed the ideal family included four or more children. Only 20 percent today hold this view.

Among Protestants the trend since 1968 has been from 37 to 16 percent in the 1980 survey, closely paralleling the current figure for Catholics.

Among all American adults, the percentage favoring larger families is 16, virtually the same as the 17 percent recorded in 1978. About half the public (51 percent) in the latest survey favor having two children.

Trend Since '36

The proportion of the public favoring large families, after having declined dramatically, from 41 percent in 1968 to 13 percent in 1977, increased slightly in 1978 and stayed at this level in 1980. The 1977 figure was the lowest since the Gallup Poll began asking this question in 1936.

In that year, 34 percent said that four or more children represented the ideal family size. The figure rose sharply, from 41 percent in 1941 to a high of 49 percent in 1945, anticipating the post-war "baby boom." As late as 1968, as noted

above, 41 percent of the public felt the model family would include four or more children. By 1971, however, the figure had dropped to 23 percent and continued to decline, to 13 percent in 1977. It then rose to 17 percent in 1978 and remains at this level (16 percent) in the latest survey.

Here is the question asked to determine what people believe to be the ideal family size:

"What do you think is the ideal number of children for a family to have?"

And here are the national results from the current survey:

Ideal Number Of Children — 1980

None	1%
One	3
Two	51
Three	21
Four	12
Five	2
Six or more	2
No opinion	8
	100%

Following is the trend since 1936 in the proportion saying four or more is the ideal number of children:

Ideal Number of Children Four Or More

1936	34%
1941	41
1945	49
1947	47
1953	41

1957	38
1960	45
1963	42
1966	35
1968	41
1971	23
1973	20
1974	19
1977	13
1978	17
1980	16

Significant differences are found when the results are analyzed by major population groups. Persons who have had only a grade school education are far more likely to prefer larger families than are those with more formal education. Similarly, persons 50 years of age and older are somewhat more inclined to favor larger families.

The following table shows current attitudes toward large families by major population groups:

Ideal Number of Children Four or More

NATIONAL	16%
Men	15
Women	18
Under 30 years old	16
30-49 years	12
50 years & older	20
Protestants	16
Catholics	20
College background	12
High school	17
Grade school	26

Views Of Canadians Found Similar

Perceptions of Canadians on the subject closely parallel the U. S. trend. The highest percentage of Canadians in favor of large families was 60 percent, recorded in 1945, in the final year of World War II. That year also marked the high point in the U.S. trend.

The percentage in Canada favoring larger families steadily declined over the next 35 years — to 17 percent in 1979, or about the same as the U.S. figures in recent years.

RELIGIOUS PREFERENCES OF TEEN VS. ADULTS

(Based on combined Gallup surveys, nationwide)

	Teens	Adult Pop. (18 & Older)
Protestants	55%	59%
Catholics	32	29
Jews	2	2
Eastern Orthodox	1	*
Other religions	3	2
None	7	8
	100%	100%

* Less than 1%.

Teens Split on Interracial Marriages

PRINCETON, N.J. — Many adult Americans can easily remember when blacks and whites were kept apart by social custom, and at times by law, but among today's teenagers things are different, according to the results of the latest Gallup Youth Survey.

For the average teen now, interracial friendships are the norm, marriage to a partner of another race is a distinct possibility, and while interracial dating is still not exactly common, it is something many young people have tried.

We found that by a very slight majority, teens say race would not make a difference in choosing a marriage partner. Clearly, however, racial barriers haven't been removed completely, as 39 percent of the teens say race would still make a difference to them in choice of a spouse.

Seventeen percent of all teen-agers have already had an interracial date, and that figure is considerably higher among older teens, and especially among teens living in the West.

As for the question of interracial friendship, an overwhelming 61% of America's teens say they have close friends of another race. That figure varies somewhat among members of various subgroups, but it is always about 50 percent. Similarly, in each subgroup, a large majority of teens say they would like to have more friends from another race.

Among today's teens, age and sex seem to have little effect on social attitudes toward other races. Boys and girls respond virtually the same to questions about the effect of race in marriage, friendships and dating. For the most part, older teens, ages 16 to 18, feel the same as their younger classmates, with one exception. We found that older teens are more likely to have had a date with a member of another race, but of course, many younger teens may have had very few dates, even with members of their own race.

Perhaps most interestingly, we learned that those social barriers that still do exist between the races are felt most strongly among white teens. Our poll results show that non-white teens are much more inclined than white teens to have interracial friendships and dates, and are much less likely to say that race makes a difference in choosing a marriage partner.

Interesting regional differences also showed up in our survey. Westerners, as we have already mentioned, are much more likely to have tried interracial dating than are teens in other parts of the country, especially those in the South. Similarly, Western teens are less likely to consider race an important factor in

selecting a marriage partner, while Southern teens are most likely to believe race will be an important consideration when it is time for them to marry.

However, on the subject of friendship, it is Midwestern teens who are the least likely to have friends — or to want more of them — from other races.

The findings reported today are based on telephone interviews with a representative national cross-section of 1,012 teen-agers, ages 13 to 18, interviewed during October, 1979. For questions asked of the entire teen-age sample, an allowance of plus or minus four percent should be made for sampling error.

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WOULD RACE MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN CHOICE OF MARRIAGE PARTNER?

	Yes	No	Not sure
NATIONAL	39%	51%	10%
Boys	38	51	11
Girls	39	51	10
Both Sexes:			
13-15 years old	37	53	10
16-18 years old	41	49	10
Whites	43	47	10
Non-whites	23	67	10
White-collar background	40	49	11
Blue-collar background	38	51	11
East	37	50	13
Midwest	40	51	9
South	44	45	11
West	31	61	8
Have had interracial date	25	63	12
Haven't had interracial date	42	48	10
Have close friendships	36	53	11
Haven't close friendships	44	47	9
Would like more friendships	34	56	10
Wouldn't like more friendships	52	41	7

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